

Basic Information about Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life. The cause of diabetes is a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles. There are two major types of diabetes:

- **Type 1** - A disease in which the body does not produce any insulin, most often occurring in children and young adults. People with Type 1 diabetes must take daily insulin injections to stay alive. Type 1 diabetes accounts for 5 to 10 percent of diabetes.
- **Type 2** - A metabolic disorder resulting from the body's inability to make enough, or properly use, insulin. It is the most common form of the disease. Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90 to 95 percent of diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is nearing epidemic proportions, due to an increased number of older Americans, and a greater prevalence of obesity and sedentary lifestyles.

Diabetes Facts You Should Know:

Diabetes is a serious disease that can lead to blindness, heart disease, strokes, kidney failure, and amputations. It kills more than 193,000 people each year.

Some people with diabetes exhibit symptoms, some do not. If you have any of the following symptoms, contact your doctor:

- Extreme thirst
- Frequent urination
- Unexplained weight loss

Should You Be Tested?

Healthy adults age 45 and over should be tested for diabetes every 3 years. If you are at special risk (family history, physically inactive, African American, Native American, or Hispanic heritage, or overweight) you should be screened earlier and more often. While a finger-stick blood test can screen for diabetes, you will need to have blood drawn after an overnight fast for an accurate diagnosis.

For more information on diabetes, call 1-800-DIABETES.